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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES

Letter dated 27 January 1994 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit, enclosed herewith, the statement by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia dated 21 January 1994, concerning the arrest and expulsion of two priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 114 (c).

(Signed) Dragomir DJOKIC
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Annex

Statement dated 21 January 1994 by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia concerning the arrest and expulsion of two priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia expresses its concern at the expulsion of two priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, under the accusation that they have performed religious rites without the approval of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Ministry of the Interior of Macedonia in several villages of the Kumanovo area and flared up in that way religious hatred and ethnic intolerance.

This is not the first time that the authorities of this former Yugoslav Republic have demonstrated an intolerant and inflexible attitude against priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church and prevented them in a rude way from performing their regular priestly duties.

By such an attitude towards the Serbian Orthodox Church and its priests, by banning rites in the Serbian language and by taking individual priests to the police for informative talks, the right is denied to the Serbian people in Macedonia to freedom of religious expression which is in direct contravention of internationally verified norms and documents accepted and supported, at least declaratively, by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In this way the atmosphere of insecurity and fear is underlined among Serbs in Macedonia whose position has not been adequately constitutionally defined yet, despite the promises and alleged readiness of competent authorities.

In addition to the already existing discrimination in the field of the use of language, employment, education and information, such behaviour of Macedonian authorities makes Serbs feel second-class citizens, i.e. being denied enjoyment of the same rights recognized to the members of the majority people and the members of other nationalities in this former Yugoslav Republic.

The Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs expects that the Macedonian side will undertake all necessary measures in order to prevent these and similar incidents from being repeated and that it will soon proceed to solving the question of the constitutional position of the Serb people in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in accordance with the highest standards of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations.